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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 NIC-01

IO-10 SAJ-01 ACDA-05 /074 W
---------- 039039
R 301210Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 608
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
UMSISSION USBERLIN UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 5464

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, GE
SUBJECT: ABRASIMOV CALLS ON ALLIED AMBASSADORS IN EAST BERLIN

SUMMARY: IN HIS COURTESY CALL ON FRENCH AMBASSADOR CHALVRON, SOVIET AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV ON MARCH 19 HAD HARSH THINGS TO SAY ABOUT THE FRG. HOWEVER, ABRASIMOV DID NOT ATTEMPT TO ENGAGE CHALVRON, AS HE HAD ME, IN A DISCUSSION OF BERLIN OR QUADRIPARTITE MATTERS. CHALVRON FELT THAT ABRASIMOV'S MAIN TASK IN EAST BERLIN WOULD BE TO RETARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF GDR/FRG TIES. END SUMMARY

1. ON MARCH 26, FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO GDR CHALVRON, ACCOMPANIED BY FRENCH DCM JESSEL, CALLED AT EMBASSY TO COMPARE NOTES ON ABRASIMOV COURTESY CALLS OF MARCH 19 ON AMERICAN AND FRENCH AMBASSADORS TO GDR. (BRITISH AMBASSADOR KEEBLE IS ON HOME LEAVE UNTIL MAY, AND ABRASIMOV APPARENTLY INTENDS TO AWAIT HIS RETURN BEFORE CALLING AT THE BRITISH EMBASSY.) PRESENT WITH ME AT THE MEETING WAS MR. HANSON OF THE EMBASSY POLITICAL SECTION.

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2. CHAVRON WAS OBVIOUSLY PUZZLED AND INTRIGUED BY HIS

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ONE-HOUR DISCUSSION WITH ABRASIMOV. HE NOTED THAT
ABRASIMOV HAD ARRIVED LATE, WITH APOLOGIES THAT HIS CALL
ON THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR HAD RUN OVER A BIT, AND HAD
LAUNCHED IMMEDIATELY INTO A DISCUSSION MARKED BY STRONG
CRITICISM OF THE FRG AND A SURPRISINGLY BLATANT OFFER TO
BE OF ASSISTANCE TO CHALVRON SHOULD HE HAVE ANY PROBLEMS
IN HIS DEALING WITH THE EAST GERMANS.

3. IN REGARD TO THE FRG, ABRASIMOV HAD SAID THAT THE FRG
ECONOMY HAD GROWN TOO POWERFUL WITHIN EUROPE AND THAT
INCREASING FRG ECONOMC INFLUENCE IN THE GDR WAS A
DISTURBING TREND NOT JUST FOR THE SOVIETS BUT FOR THE
WESTERN POWERS AS WELL. HE HAD ARGUED THAT THE INTERESTS
OF FRANCH AND THE OTHER ALLIED POWERS LAY IN INCREASING
TRADE WITH THE GDR TO BREAK THE WEST GERMAN CORNER ON
THE GDR MARKET. ABARASIMOV HAD THEN BEGUN A LONG TIRADE
AGAINST NATIONALIST TRENDS IN THE FRG, REFERRING TO THE
FRG AS A "COMMON ENEMY" OF FRANCE AND THE SOVIET
UNION. WHILE HE HAD CHARACTERIZED CDU LEADER HELMUT
KOHL AS "NOT DESIRABLE" BUT STILL ACCEPTABLE FROM THE
SOVIET POINT OF VIEW, ABRASIMOV HAD WARNED THAT A STRAUSS
CHANCELLORSHIP WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO A RETURN TO
DICTATORSHIP AND NAZISM. ABRASIMOV HAD OBSERVED THAT
DETENTE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST HAD BEGUN WITH THE BETTER-
MENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN FRANCE AND THE SOVIET UNION IN
THE EARLY 1960'S, THAT BOTH COUNTRIES STILL HAD AN
OVERRIDING INTEREST IN DETENTE AND THE RELAXATION OF
TENSIONS IN EUROPE, AND THAT THEREFORE CONSERVATIVE AND NATIONALISTIC
TRENDS IN THE FRG WERE CONTRARY TO INTERESTS OF BOTH
COUNTRIES.

4. IN RELATING ABARSIMOV'S REMARKS ON FRENCH-GDR
RELATIONS, CHALVRON RECALLED THAT ABRASIMOV HAD SPOKEN MORE
LIKE A "HIGH COMMISSIONER" THAN AN AMBASSADOR. ABRASIMOV
HAD STATED EMPHATICALLY HIS BELIEF THAT GDR RELATIONS
WITH THE FRENCH SHOULD BE INCREASED AND THAT TO THIS END HE
WOULD BE HELPFUL IN ANY WAY HE COULD. HE HAD TOLD CHALVRON
THAT IF THE LATTER WANTED TO SEE HONECKER HE NEEDED ONLY
TO LET THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR KNOW. IN THE SAME VEIN,
ABRASIMOV HAD STATED BOLDLY THAT IF THE GDR WERE NOT
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FORTHCOMING ENOUGH IN NEGOTIATIONS ON A CULTURAL AGREEMENT
WITH FRANCE, CHALVRON ONCE AGAIN NEEDED ONLY TO CONTACT
ABRASIMOV. CHALVRON DID NOT DETECT IN ABRASIMOV'S
REMARKS ANY EXPRESSED OR IMPLIED DISTRUST OR CRITICISM
OF THE GDR BUT RATHER AN APPARENT DESIRE TO MAKE SURE
THAT CHALVRON KNEW THE TERRAIN IN EAST BERLIN.

5. CHALVRON NOTED WITH SURPRISE THAT IN THE COUSE OF

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ABRASIMOV'S 55-MINUTE CALL ON HIM THE SUBJECT OF WEST
BERLIN WAS RAISED ONLY TANGENTIALLY WHEN ABRASIMOV BRIEFLY
MENTIONED SOVIET DISSATISFACTION WITH THE GENRAL SITUATION
THERE.

6. WHEN CHALVRON HAD FINISHED, I BRIEFED HIM ON MY
DISCUSSION WITH ABRASIMOV, DESCRIBING ABRASIMOV'S OPEN
SUGGESTION THAT HE DISCUSS BERLIN MATTERS WITH ME,.
#8 543 9, 5#3 &$4 - 5#3 9;835 7,89,'S MOST IMPORTANT
ALLY, AND HIS CHARACTERIZATION OF THE FRG AS THE BETE NOIR OF
US-USSR RELATIONS. I DESCRIBED IN DETAIL HOW I HAD REBUFFED
ABRASIMOV'S SUGGESTION THAT WE DISCUSS QUADRIPARTITE MATTERS.

CHALVRON SAY ONLY ONE POINT COMMON TO BOTH
CONVERSATIONS; ABRASIMOV'S SURPRISINGLY STRONG CRITICISM
OF THE FRG. HE WONDERED WHY ABRASIMOV HAD NOT PROBED HIM
ON WEST BERLIN AND QUADRIPARTITE MATTERS AND OPINED THAT
AFTER MEETING WITH SUCH A STRONG AMERICAN RESPONSE HE
MAY HAVE DECIDED TO SWITCH TACTICS IN HIS SECOND CALL.
CHALVRON SUGGESTED THAT ABRASIMOV MAY HAVE BEEN TRYING
TO DIVIDE THE ALLIES BY APPROACHING EACH COUNTRY WITH A
DIFFERENT LINE.

7. CHALVRON WENT ON TO DISCUSS THE IMPLICATIONS OF ABRASIMOV'S
PRESENCE IN BERLIN. HE FELT THE SOVIETS WERE INCREASINGLY
CONCERNED ABOUT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FRG AND THAT
ABRASIMOV'S MISSION IN EAST BERLIN WOULD BE TO OVERSEE AND
PROBABLY CURTAIN A GDR-FRG RELATIONSHIP THAT FROM THE SOVIET
POINT OF VIEW HAD MOVED TOO FAR TOO FAST. CHALVRON ALSO
NOTED YEFREMOV'S LESS THAT STELLAR PERFORMANCE IN EAST
BERLIN AND SAID THAT DURING HIS TENURE SOVIET CONTROL ON
GDR CONTACTS WITH BONN HAD WANED. WE OBSERVED THAT
YEFREMOV IN HIS FAREWELL REMARKS ON MARCH 12 HAD STRESSED
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HIS ADHERENCE TO THE BREZHEV LINE AND THAT HIS ALMOST
DEFENSIVE REFERENCE TO HAVING DONE HIS JOB IN"GOOD
CONSCIENCE" COULD MEAN THAT HIS DEPARTURE SIGNIFIES A
CHANGE IN SOVIET POLICIES IN EAST BERLIN. CHALVRON
NOTED THAT DURING BREZHNEV'S ILLNESS THE SOVIET EMBASSY
IN EAST BERLIN HAD APPEARED TO BE ADRIFT AND DIRECTION-
LESS AND THAT THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF ABRASIMOV, A
POLITBURO FIGURE WITH CLOSE TIES TO SUSLOV AND GRETCHKO,
COULD VERY WELL MEAN THAT A NEW HARDENED LINE ON WEST
GERMANY AND BERLIN HAD BEEN DECIDED UPON WITHIN THE
POLITBURO. NOTING ABRASIMOV'S EMPHASIS ON THE DANGER
OF ACONSERVATIVE TREND IN THE FRG, I RECALLED THAT ONE
OF THE MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS HAD SUGGESTED TO
ME THAT THE SOVIETS WERE PERHAPS ASSEMBLING
A NEW TEAM IN EAST BERLIN IN THE EVENT THERE SHOULD BE A

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CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN BONN.

7. COMMENT: THESE INITIAL CONTACTS WITH ABRASIMOV LEND
WEIGHT TO THE ARGUMENT THAT HIS PRESENCE IN EAST BERLIN
PORTENDS A HARDENED SOVIET LINE ON QUADRIPARTITE MATTERS
AND A PROBABLY SOVIET ATTEMPT MORE EFFECTIVELY TO CONTROL
AND PERHAPS SLOW DOWN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GDR-FRG
RELATIONS. UNLIKE YEFREMOV, WHO CONSTANTLY STRESSED THE
IMPORTANCE OF DETENTE IN HIS CONTACTS WITH ALLIED
AMBASSADORS HERE, ABRASIMOV HAS COME TO EAST BERLIN FOCUSSING
ON PROBLEMS WHICH HE CONSISTENTLY TRACES TO THE FRG OUTLINED IN
SEPARATE APPROACHES IN HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH ME AND CHALVRON.COOPER

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